

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /032 W
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P 211343Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4395

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 659

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MORG, BA
SUBJECT: MIDEASTFOR: RUMORS AND OTHER STRAWS IN THE WIND

REF: STATE 061121

1. UP-BEAT REMARKS OF INFORMATION MINISTER QUOTED IN BALTIMORE SUN ARTICLE, REFTEL, REFLECT GROWING VOLUME OF LOCAL RUMORS AND OTHER INDICATORS TO EFFECT THAT NAVY WILL STAY IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER. AMBASSADOR GAVE COPY OF TEXT CONTAINED REFTEL TO MININFO MARCH 19 AND LATTER READ IT EAGERLY, SAYING HE WANTED TO BE CERTAIN HE WAS QUOTED ACCURATELY SINCE HIS REMARKS HAD BEEN CLEARED BY THE PRIME MINISTER. HE SAID QUOTES WERE ACCURATE.

2. ALMOAYYED WOULD ADD ONLY THAT SUBJECT IS DELICATE ONE FOR GOB AND HE HAS LATELY CLEARED HIS REMARKS ON IT TO JOURNALISTS WITH "THOSE INVOLVED" ON GOB SIDE. HE DISCLAIMS ANY KNOWLEDGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. AS DEPT AWARE, ALMOAYYED HIMSELF HAS NEVER BEEN MIDEASTFOR SUPPORTER. SUBSTANCE OF HIS REMARKS IN REFTEL, EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI-SOUNDING PHRASES ABOUT U. S. INITIATIVE AND NOT UNDERMINING US ROLE, GIVES SOME WEIGHT TO "IMPRESSION" PARKS TOLD PAO HE GAINED FROM MININFO: THAT MIDEASTFOR HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT CAIRO AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT IN AMIR AND FONMIN'S TALK WITH OTHER ARABS.

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3. MINISTER OF STATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS AL-URRAYED TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 20 THAT IT WOULD BE "A SHAME" IF NAVY LEFT (EMBOFF AGREED). LOCAL BUSINESSMEN, SOME WELL-CONNECTED, WHO USED TO ASK AMBASSADOR WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE NAVY HAVE BEEN SAYING LATELY HOW NICE IT IS THAT NAVY IS STAYING. BAPCO PRESIDENT HAS GIVEN IT AS HIS JUDGMENT THAT "NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN" IF NAVY SIMPLY STAYED PUT COME JUNE 30. IN SHORT, RUMORS AND

SOME MORE SOLID STUFF INDICATE THAT THE GOB IS LEANING TOWARD
KEEPING SOME NAVY IN BAHRAIN.

4. ON MARCH 20 BAHRAIN SCHOOL HEADMASTER, DR. WANNEBO, TOLD
AMBASSADOR THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD TOLD HIM MARCH 19 THAT
NAVY WOULD STAY. ACCORDING WANNEBO, FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD HIM
THAT HE, FONMIN, HOPED THAT NEEDED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS WOULD
BE MADE TO SCHOOL NOW THAT DOD IS STAYING IN SCHOOL AND NAVY IS
STAYING IN BAHRAIN. WANNEBO SAID FONMIN REPEATED PHRASE A NUMBER
OF TIMES DURING THEIR CONVERSATION.

5. AMBASSADOR CALLED FONMIN MARCH 20 AND, REFERRING TO SPATE OF
RUMORS IN GENERAL AND FONMIN'S REMARKS TO WANNEBO IN PARTICULAR,
ASKED FONMIN FOR EXPLANATION. AMBASSADOR REMINDED FONMIN THAT
FONMIN HAD ASKED THAT HE BE ONLY CHANNEL FOR AMBASSADOR'S
DISCUSSION WITH GOB OF NAVY'S FUTURE. ARRANGEMENT SHOULD WORK
BOTH WAYS: AMBASSADOR EXPECTED TO BE FIRST OUTSIDE GOB TO LEARN
OF ANY GOB DECISION CONCERNING NAVY. FONMIN WAS REMINDED THAT
WANNEBO IS USG EMPLOYEE AND THAT IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE FOR FONMIN
TO DISCUSS NAVY'S FUTURE WITH HIM.

6. FONMIN REPLIED NOT VERY CONVINCINGLY THAT HE HAD NOT TOLD
WANNEBO ANY SUCH THING; WANNEBO HAD "MISUNDERSTOOD" AND THAT
RUMORS ABOUT NAVY WERE JUST SPECULATION BASED ON DOD REMAINING
IN SCHOOL OPERATION. HE PROMISED AMB THAT HE WOULD BE FIRST
TO LEARN OF GOB DECISION. HE THEN VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS
TRYING TO ADVANCE HIS RESPONSE TO MARCH 19 MEETING. SAID A
SPECIAL MEETING OF CONCERNED MINISTERS WOULD BE HELD MARCH 21
AND HE WOULD RESPOND TO AMBASSADOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.
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AMBASSADOR SAID AN EARLY RESPONSE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

7. COMMENT: SHARP RISE IN NUMBER OF NAVY-IS-STAYING RUMORS AND
REMARKS DOES SEEM TO DATE FROM ABOUT END OF AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT,
RATHER THAN FROM MUCH EARLIER, AND WIDELY KNOWN DOD DECISION
TO STAY IN BAHRAIN SCHOOL. THOUGH SCHOOL DECISION DID AT FIRST
GIVE RISE TO SOME SPECULATION THAT NAVY WOULD STAY AS WELL,
NUMBER OF AMBASSADOR'S CONTACTS WHO KNEW SCHOOL AND NAVY ISSUES
WERE SEPARATE HAVE SINCE REMARKED THAT IT IS "NICE" NAVY IS
STAYING.

8. ACTION: DEPT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER ASKING EMBASSY JIDDA, AND
PERHAPS CAIRO AS WELL, TO LEARN IF MIDEASTFOR WAS TOPIC DURING
CAIRO MEETING AND, IF SO, WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS/ADVICE WERE GIVEN
TO GOB.
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